

Supervisor Pam Slater-Price

# District 3 Slate

June 2010

Third District, County of San Diego

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Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price listens to a briefing by Cal-FIRE concerning the approaching fire season and the region's response.

## Fire Season Is Here - County Is Ready

### *Danger Is Greater Due To Oak Pest*

**A**wet winter is about to turn into another hot San Diego summer that brings with it a heightened risk of wild-fire.

Conditions this year are especially volatile due to the growth of underbrush combined with the devastation caused by the Gold-spotted oak borer, which is decimating oak trees in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Infected or dying trees provide additional fuel for a wildfire. Since it was rediscovered in San Diego County last year near Marion Bear Memorial Park in La Jolla, the oak borer has killed more than 20,000 oak trees.

Sections of the Cleveland National Forest have infection rates between 65 percent and 100 percent. Mortality occurs in trees that are more than 5 inches in diameter; the oak borer prefers to attack older, mature trees.

"We must remain vigilant and clear the trees where we can," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price. "Since the devastations of 2003 and 2007, the County of San Diego has made tremen-

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Cal-FIRE Battalion Chief Nick Schuler answers a question.

### *Board of Supervisors Will Adopt Balanced Budget for FY 2010-11*

**J**une marks more than the beginning of summer - it is also the month that municipalities prepare the next fiscal year's budget. Supervisors will finalize the County of San Diego's spending priorities while keeping close eyes on the economic crisis within the state, the nation and overseas.

"As residents know, each paycheck has to stretch a little farther today than it did just a few years ago," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price. "The economic challenges we are facing are significant. We must be cautious and prudent in our budget."

Chairwoman Slater-Price and the Board of Supervisors are experienced at their job. And this is where experience counts, she said.

The County of San Diego maintains a balanced budget by reducing budgeted positions and by making targeted reductions.

Readjustments to spending priorities are made each year based on the region's economic situation; the Board of Supervisors also maintains prudent multi-million dollar reserves.

The Board also follows a five-year plan that can be adjusted according to the economy. The County of San Diego pays cash for infrastructure needs when possible and refuses to defer maintenance.

San Diego County enjoys top "AAA" bond rating, making it easier and less-costly to borrow funds for one-time capital projects. This Board of Supervisors champions fiscal prudence, has increased the reserve fund in the past several years, and looks to further control retirement benefits.

Additionally, the Board of Supervisors is a stable, experienced elected body.

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## News of Note

### Kiosk Speeds Up Visits

Customers to the Building Division of the Department of Planning and Land Use are finding it easier to conduct their business following the installation of a computerized self-serve kiosk. Until now, customers have started out at the manned central information booth, where staff members determined which counters customers needed to visit, and in what order.



The central booth assisted customers with complicated business entailing visiting several counters in specific order. However, regular customers who understand the land-use process and inexperienced clients who have simple business often were stuck in line while staff helped people with complicated business.

The self-serve kiosk avoids that problem and speeds up the process. With the click of a few buttons, the machine directs customers to the right counter, automatically "queuing" them up for service. The machine also prints out a service ticket.

### Making Sure Pools Are Safe

The Department of Environmental Health is making sure that public pool operators have installed anti-entrapment drain covers and safety systems to comply with a new state law. The department is responsible for inspecting more than 4,000 public pools and spas in the county, ensuring



they are properly maintained. It is the lead enforcement agency for the new state law that went into effect Jan. 1,

which requires public pools built before that date to be retrofitted with anti-entrapment devices and systems by July 1.

### West Nile Alerts Via Text

Residents concerned about possible exposure to West Nile Virus can now receive text alerts on incidents in their neighborhoods. By texting PEST to 75309, users can learn where birds or mosquitoes have tested positive or receive tips on how to prevent the disease.

## Flood Insurance Rates Drop Due To County's Diligence

Residents in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County will pay less for flood insurance with a new Class 7 rating from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The new rating means an additional automatic rate reduction of 5 percent. This is the third such rate decrease for the County of San Diego.

To receive the Class 7 rating, San Diego County had to go beyond minimum floodplain management requirements and develop extra measures to provide protection from flooding.

The County also received credit points for restrictions on development in flood-prone areas, implementing the

reverse 911 system, and the StormReady certification that was presented by the National Weather Service to the County Board of Supervisors in December 2009. That award recognized the County for being better prepared for rapidly changing weather patterns and severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness.

"Flooding can and does occur in San Diego County," Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price said.

"During this past winter, we experienced heavy rain storms forcing the closure of many roads, severe beach erosion and property damage. Insurance rates reduction due to the aggressive work of the Public Works Department will be a great help to many."



### UPGRADED...

A million-dollar-plus upgrade of the sheriff's ASTREA MD 500 helicopter has been completed and the craft is back in the skies over San Diego County. The upgrade extends the life of the copter another 12,000 hours, or about 20 years, while improving its performance, ability to carry larger payloads, fly at higher altitudes, and perform better in extreme temperatures, such as during a wildfire. The Board of Supervisors agreed that the fiscally prudent move was to fund the upgrade that improved the copter's fire-fighting capabilities. It would have cost the county at least \$2.5 million to replace the unit.

Photos/Keith Spears





## HONORING THOSE WHO PROTECT US ALL...



### *Slater-Price Pays Respects*



Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price chats with Patricia J. Duke, a Commander with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department.

**M**embers of the region's law enforcement agencies and elected officials turned out on May 5 to pay their respects for the two latest officers enshrined on the San Diego County Law Enforcement Memorial at the County Administration Center.

The annual ceremony honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty as well as law enforcement personnel who give their lives daily to protect their communities.

San Diego Deputy Sheriff Ken Collier and Border Patrol Agent Robert Rosas had their names etched into the memorial.

"We owe a debt of gratitude to those who unselfishly protect our lives and homes," said Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price. "This monument is a sad but lasting tribute to those who died in the line of duty. I look forward to the year when we do not add any more names."



Members of the mounted patrol pay their respect.





## AROUND THE THIRD DISTRICT

### BUDGET

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"We have been together for a while and we work together well. We believe in fiscal prudence. It is as simple as that," explained Chairwoman Slater-Price.

The Board of Supervisors last month removed 588 positions in the departments of parks, planning, probation, public defender and health and human services from the 2010-11 fiscal year budget to keep the county's proposed services in balance with expected revenue.

Continued declines in sales and property tax revenue – the two primary sources of General Fund dollars – are both down significantly. Median home values, upon which the County bases its property tax revenue, have fallen from a high of \$510,000 in 2005 to \$330,000 in 2009, representing a 10 percent reduction in tax revenue. Unemployment in San Diego County in 2009 was 9.7 percent, the highest rate in 20 years. Higher unemployment translates into less discretionary spending by families, resulting in less revenue from sales tax.

"The greatest source of revenue to the County of San Diego is from the state, tax money our area must have to pay for the programs the state requires local municipalities to provide," explained Chairwoman Slater-Price. "But due to the state's inability to solve its fiscal mess, they continue to take

away funds while expecting the County to continue providing these mandated services.

"Since state funding represents one quarter of the proposed \$4.86 billion budget, each raid by the state digs that much deeper into the services provided by the county."

This impacts the discretionary funding – libraries, parks and other popular services – the county can afford, said Chairwoman Slater-Price.

### WILDFIRE

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dous strides in upgrading the region's firefighting capabilities, including adding new fire engines, water trucks and other equipment. In addition, the County upgraded its aerial firefighting ability.

It also championed the effort to allow firefighting aircraft to fly at night, giving the region an important new resource to fight brush fires before they gain the energy that turns it into a wildfire.

"We cannot prevent Mother Nature from



Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price chats with Cal-FIRE Unit Chief Howard Windsor (right) and Battalion Chief Nick Schuler.

striking, but we are better prepared, better trained and better coordinated to respond to a wildfire when one breaks out," said Chairwoman Slater-Price. "I remember the walls of fire that roared through Escondido and Rancho Bernardo in 2007. I was at the fairgrounds doing what I could to assist those who were ordered to evacuate their homes.

"We can be ready for a wildfire and know how to respond to the threat immediately with as many resources as we can possibly deploy."

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